

581 It was not felt necessary to marry. Because of the strong
589 economic position of women, a few spinsters had their own homes,
farmed their own lands, enlisting nephews and nieces to help, or
hiring as needed, and entered fully into the social life of the
area. Others lived with relatives and assisted in the maintenance
[593] of a larger household unit. Some men, too, never married.
One group of grown siblings of both sexes stated they were "too
happy together to marry."

836 Pre-marital chastity was more or less observed. If a girl
became pregnant before marriage, her parents brought pressure,
usually successful, on the boy to marry her. The occasional
848 illegitimate child was raised without stigma in the girl's
family, though problems arose during pregnancy and delivery
(cf. "cone of wood" below). The mother later found a husband.
One father was angered because he felt his daughter's pregnancy
wrecked her chances for a marriage of prestige. He was
conspicuous for his social aspirations towards city ways.

864 Information on human sexual matters was gathered by the
831 young sometimes by accidental observation of parents and others,
through hints from hearing cursing, and by conversations with
grandparents, older siblings, and friends of the same sex. Men
joked on sex matters at the all-male rice-uprooting parties.
Being antithetic to the ascetic prescriptions of Buddhism, sex
talk was highly charged. Sex was never discussed in mixed
company.

Residence

592 The nuclear family of husband, wife, and unmarried children
was the primary social and productive unit, but other resident
kinship units larger and smaller also occurred. After marriage,
[591] the couple usually lived for a time in the house of the parents
of one spouse or the other; then, as soon as they could afford
it, set up housekeeping in their own house. Of a sample of 96
families in Bang Chan, 30 set up independent households at once
after marriage, 16 after one year, and the rest, a few per year,
on throughout 10 years; 15 of the families never had a house
of their own but lived with other relatives (Janlekha:37). Of
298 families, 59.4 per cent lived independently as a nuclear
family, while 34.9 per cent lived with other relatives in the
house. (The remaining were single persons living alone, or
priests at the temple in the "ecclesiastical family.") The
average size of the households (not necessarily the nuclear
families) was 5.7 persons, with a range of 1 to 14, the median
361 being 6 (ibid. 28-29). The house of a new couple was usually
built adjacent to parents or relatives, and certainly within
621 calling distance or sight of some other household. Social
patterns of cooperative work, borrowing, and visiting kept
adjacent households, whether kin, co-religionists or not, in

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been religious in nature—getting the assistance of villagers to construct monks' cubicles or repairing the small rest pavilions near the monastery, the "pay" for which is Buddhist merit—or, if secular, infused with sacred attributes, such as when the head monk helped raise funds for the construction of the Bang Chan school by supporting the notion that villagers who gave money to the school would make merit. It is clear, however, that the organizational vigor of the Bang Chan monkhood is mainly a function of the aggressive personality and leadership of Bang Chan's particular abbot, and that with a more retiring, contemplative head monk—a not uncommon or undesirable role for an abbot—the situation would be strikingly different.

In a similar vein, it is difficult to link the incidence of land ownership and tenancy in Bang Chan with any consistent national or regional pattern. At the national level, Thailand is fortunate among predominantly peasant nations in having a comparatively low level of land tenancy, an estimated 80 percent of the cultivated land of the country being owned by the small, independent farmers who work it (National FAO Committee of Thailand 1949). However, within these broad, national parameters there is considerable inter- and intra-regional variation. Zimmerman's study in the early 1930's indicated that the number of peasants without land ranged from 14 percent in Southern Thailand, through 27 percent in the North, to 36 percent in the Central Plain. These regional figures seemed to have remained relatively constant through the years in that deYoung (1955) reports a tenancy figure of 27.7 percent for a village in the North which he studied in 1949, and Janlekha (1955) indicates a figure of 37 percent for Bang Chan, in the Central Plain, in 1953.⁴ As close as the Bang Chan figure may seem to its regional average, however, it is of little significance when seen against the background of variability that exists within the region as a whole: for example, in villages near the city of Lopburi, only 12 percent of the villagers are landless, but in the Khlooj Rangsit area, not far

⁴ It should be noted, however, that other indices of economic well-being in Bang Chan have not remained constant. To the extent that his historical materials permit, Janlekha (1955) points out that land holdings have become increasingly smaller, the amount of time newly-married couples must live with one set of parents (in order to accumulate the capital necessary for setting up their own neolocal households) longer, and the price of land higher. Janlekha's data indicate that in the five-year period between 1948 and 1953 alone, the price of agricultural land, as contrasted with considerably more expensive residential land, in and around Bang Chan increased 560 percent!

It is also well to keep in mind Janlekha's observation that, depending upon familial circumstances such as number of children and availability and proximity of labor, a Bang Chan farmer who rents a large plot of land from a benevolent absentee landlord, who is often unfamiliar with Bang Chan crop values, may be considerably better off economically than a farmer who works a small plot of land that is all his own.

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121 remotely extended families, or with what L. M. Hanks [1959c] calls the
594 multi-local extended family, about which there is more below.)

• 591 The variations of the nuclear family, obviously excepting the monkhood,
594 arise primarily out of the large proportion of recently married couples who find it more expedient to continue living with one set of parents while accumulating funds for setting up their own independent households. In the case of one-person families, the variation arises when individuals are unable to live with their kin, are deserted by them, or have none. All the one-person families tend to be poor and are comprised largely of elderly people. In arrangements of the former type, there is a slight (five to three) tendency to matrilocality over patrilocality, and despite the intention of all concerned that the arrangements remain impermanent, there is considerable variability as to how long they are maintained. Analyzing a sample of 96 Bang Chan families, Janlekha found that although 30 percent came into being as nuclear families immediately after marriage, the balance underwent a period of residence with parents ranging from one to twenty years, the average being four years, with 16 percent never moving from the parents' home at all. Most cases of what Janlekha calls "limited extended families" result from a stem family inheritance pattern, although some entail elderly parents breaking up their households and moving in with the family of one of their mature children.

In addition to these basic variations, more accurately labeled "alternatives," there are several other variations of the nuclear family that occur with sufficient frequency to be noticed and at the same time are considered not at all unusual by the villagers themselves. Their significance for us is that they reveal what appears to be an almost nonchalant willingness or acquiescence on the part of the villagers to make modifications and adjustments in their living arrangements whenever necessary. Underlying this seems to be a fundamental assumption that the question of who lives with whom simply is not one of overriding importance: as long as individuals can live together without discord, act in terms of the household's established patterns of superordination and subordination, contribute labor or money to the family larder commensurate with their ages, and not inconvenience each other, they will be welcomed into the household; if unable or unwilling to fulfill such elementary obligations, they may take their leave, even if they are in fact full-fledged members of the nuclear family.

This rather flexible, or what the late John Embree would have called (1950) "loosely structured," approach to family organization is expressed in both centripetal and centrifugal ways.

596 Consonant with the fact that in all but the poorest Bang Chan families there is almost always enough rice to feed another mouth, it is common in

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the village to find dependent relatives—siblings, cousins, nephews, nieces—who, unable to make a go of it elsewhere, are accepted into a relative's family, sometimes to the extent of eventually taking over the headship of the family. Sometimes, on the initiative and invitation of an elderly or lonely relative, an entire nuclear family will be asked to take over or share a household. Children of poor or "inconvenienced" families (where a new child is born before the first is weaned, where there are too many children for the mother to handle comfortably, where a youngster is simply being "troublesome") are adopted or "borrowed" by other villagers for varying periods of time. This is done preferably by relatives, sometimes by neighbors, and often, in the case of boys, by the monastery, where the children become hand-servants to the monks and are supposed to absorb, by a kind of osmotic process, righteous ways of behaving. (Of my three male life history informants, two were given over to relatives at the ages of two, the third at the age of eight; one spent his childhood with four different families, another with five families; one describes his adolescence as "wandering from place to place." The psychological implications of such displacement should not be underestimated.) On occasion, two independent nuclear families—almost always connected by some kinship tie—will join together for convenience to share cooking facilities, in which case they effectively become a single extended family. And in some cases, although rare, one will encounter adult children living in independent households but handing over their income to a parent, living in still another home, who disburses the proceeds when necessary. 596 597

On the other side, it is common practice in Bang Chan now for a husband to be away for four or five months at a time earning money in Bangkok, or during the dry season on a vegetable farm, returning home to visit his wife and children whenever opportunity permits, with or without funds. The wife may still maintain their household, but often returns to live with her own parents.⁷ In a similar vein, although obviously more extreme, it is not unusual to find families in Bang Chan which have simply "disintegrated," as the villagers say. Much depends here on the circumstances of family members. Bang Chaners usually reserve the term "disintegrated" for families that no longer have the economic wherewithal or justification for staying together as functioning units. In these instances, family members simply go their separate ways, if possible back to their families of orientation or to other relatives, husbands perhaps into the monkhood, and the children to whomever will take them. Most frequently, "disintegration" is characteristic of very poor families, and in the minds of 596 591 • (464) 596 586 182 [578]

⁷ This pattern may be related to the old *corvée* labor pattern when able-bodied village men were away from their families for extended periods of time. (466) (651) (174)

178 appearance in the village that the case has been closed.

592 One reason he chose to take up residence in Bangchan after
621 business failure in Bangkok was that his wife owned through
166 inheritance a 17-rai parcel of rice land in the village.

Another equally important reason was the relatively low
cost of living in the village as compared to the city,
which could not be overlooked especially when he had a
large family of ten.

162 Of the 21 families evolving or separating from
178 existing families in Bangchan during the period from 1949
592 to 1953, sixteen were young married couples seeking inde-
591 pendent families of their own. Eight of these were married
621 before 1949, and the rest after that year. These sixteen
young couples altogether contributed, in the 1953 census,
21 children of age-group 0-4 years or about ten percent of
all children of that age-group in the whole village.

This process of separation of young married couples
from the old families is normal, in fact a characteristic
feature, in areas where the nuclear family system predom-
inates. Although some newly wed couples were able to estab-
lish independent families immediately, the pattern was that
they remained for a year or more with family of either side,
during which time they accumulated capital necessary for
future establishment. A separate section will be devoted
to this important feature of the village economy.

178 In contrast to the above normal separation from old
592 families, the remaining five of the 21 families underwent
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583 of their adopted daughter, of which some 300 baht went to
575 bedding materials and 5,000 baht to the wedding feast which
435 the bride's parents alone were supposed to give. It should
be noted, however, that in this last case the bride's par-
ents received as dowry from the bridegroom's parents 4,000
baht in cash and two baht⁹ weight of gold worth about a
thousand baht, and they also received from the guests an
aggregate customary contribution of 2,360 baht. Thus, the
bride's parents came out with a net gain of 1,080 baht plus
the gold which was to be given to the bride.

583 While the conventional marriage was somewhat costly
especially for the bridegroom's party, the popular marriage
by elopement was much less expensive. Our records show that
in addition to nominal ceremonial materials of white cloth,
candles and incense, the bridegroom had to pay a fine of
only a few hundred baht to his wife's parents when the couple
came to receive formal forgiveness from them.

We do not have comparative figures for the occurrence
of conventional marriage and elopement, but the latter ap-
peared very frequently in our daily field notes as against
very few cases of the former.

• 591 There are two types of establishment of new families
184 after marriage: (a) immediately after marriage, and (b)
some years after staying with parents of either party.

It was observed that immediate establishment of new
families after marriage was common among couples originating
from farm laboring families and families of poor farm operators.

[804] 9. One baht weight is equivalent to fifteen grams.

- 591 A probable explanation was that the poor had nothing to
184 gain from staying for a few years with parents after marriage. More important still was that with limited working land, presumably rented, the parents also did not get any economic benefit from the couple, whose stay with the family meant extra mouths to feed rather than extra hands to work.

Immediate establishment of new families was also observed in some couples originating from well-to-do families. This was nevertheless rare, because in the present economic condition it was rather difficult to find families rich enough to provide for the immediate establishment of a new family. The general pattern, then, was to let the couple accumulate for themselves while getting the benefit of free board and lodging from the parents. This period of stay with the parents with the intention for accumulation for future establishment may be called the 'nascent period'.

- 591 Table 7 shows that 30 out of 96 families of farm
178 operators covered by the study were able to establish their
184 nuclear families immediately after marriage. When these 96 farm operators were grouped according to their dates of marriage to the present spouses or last spouses in cases of widowers and widows, the distribution was as follows: those married during the absolute monarchy regime (up to 1932), 54; those married during the democratic regime (after 1932), 37; never married, 4; date of marriage not available, 1. Since 20 out of the 30 families which were able to establish themselves immediately were in the first group, the

TABLE 7
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF LENGTH OF NASCENT PERIOD
OF 96 SAMPLE-FAMILIES
Bangchan, Thailand, 1953

Length in Years	Frequency
0	30
1	16
2	9
3	4
4	4
5	5
6	2
7	0
8	1
9	3
10	2
11-15	3
16-20	1
Not separate*	15
No information	1
Total	96

* These 15 families existed earlier as minor components of the old families. Headship of each family was later assumed by the present family head.

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- 591 proportion for immediate establishment was 20 out of 54 or
184 37 per cent for those married before 1932, and 10 out of
178 37 or only 27 per cent for those married after 1932. A
declining trend was thus observed of the ability to estab-
lish a new family immediately after marriage.

591 Table 7 also shows that the 'nascent' period of 50
592 families (that had ones) ranged from one to twenty years,
184 averaging four years, the mode being one year, and the median
178 two years. Among the fifteen non-separating families, eight
headships were taken over by offspring while one or both of
the parents were still alive (we shall call this 'type A'),
four headships were taken over by offspring through the death
of parents (we shall call this 'type B'), and three head-
ships were taken over by spouses ('type C'). The last men-
tioned changing over of family headship (type C) occurred
in three ways: through marriage of a man to a female head
of a family whereby the husband automatically became the
family head, death of the husband, and desertion of the
husband.

591 The changing over of the family headship of the type
592 B in Table 7 was a natural process of inheritance. In type
184 A, it was found that senility accounted for seven out of
428 eight cases of the changing over, the one exception being
587 the case of a widower who wanted to have a second wife and
who thought that the family assets originally belonged to
his first wife's biological family and therefore an outside
woman should not lay a hand on the 300,000 baht property.

- 591 A factor that should also be taken into account was that he
592 had a regular income of 450 baht a month from his job in the
434 Highways Department, which by the village standard was more
than enough for him to live comfortably with his second wife.

591 Historical records of the 96 farm operating families
do not contain information as to how the 50 families passing
through nascent period were divided into those staying with
wives' families and those staying with husbands' families.
The 1953 census, however, reveals that of 48 married couples
then living in 42 families of parents of either side (four
such families included two couples and one family three
couples), 23 were with husbands' parents and 25 with wives'
parents. The proportion may thus be estimated at about one
to one.

59 During the nascent period, the couple ordinarily
434 received from the parents they were staying with a kind of
[431] annual bonus locally called lampai which varied according
to the economic status as well as generosity of the parents.
Lampai took several different forms. Thus, a couple might
receive all the paddy harvested from a specified area of the
field of three, five, or ten rai; they might be given a fixed
quantity of the crop -- say 50 or 100 tang; they might receive
cash -- say 500 baht or any other varying amount. In some
cases, the couple were expected to earn their lampai outside
the family farm after obligation to family work had been ful-
filled. This took the form of piece-working or trivial trade.

59 If no lampai was given, the parents might give some gold in
[431]

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themselves up; financially, to compete with A's parents.

The same informant said further, however, that usually it was up to the couple themselves to decide when to leave the old family. Parents, in his words, "rarely drive the offspring out. They also rarely resist the couple's decision to leave. The most they can do in case labor is badly needed is to ask the couple to stay a year or two longer."

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On the other hand, a second informant, a headman as was the first, indicated that the five-year period he and his wife spent with his wife's parents immediately after their marriage in 1922 was their most prosperous time. As [431] lampai the couple were given the harvest from a 5-rai parcel each year. When he married, he already had five baht weight [426] of gold. With surplus income, he was engaged in lending for interest. Accumulation during their five years' stay with the parents included timber enough to construct the new home when they moved out, one hundred tang of paddy, and forty baht weight of gold.

As a matter of fact, there are several factors that should be taken into consideration in evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of a newly wed couple undergoing the nascent period. These are the lampai arrangement, willingness of the parents to let the couple earn extra income from sources outside the family, current wage rate and job opportunity, and, most important, the current profitability of the farming business which is assumed to be the alternative

- 591 if the couple do not choose to stay with the parents. In
434 any event, the fact that the couple are more or less free
to leave the old family provides an opportunity for the couple
to escape all the disadvantages that might be imposed upon
them, leaving all the advantages to be acquired.¹⁰ As for
those who apparently discounted the merit of the nascent
period, the author suspects that they neglected to consider
the expected net income from farming and that they were un-
realistic in thinking only of wage rate and in underestimating
the more crucial problem of job opportunity.

59 In addition to their own wealth accumulated during
431 the nascent period, gifts in the form of farm equipment,
434 paddy and land were usually given to the couple by their
parents at the time they left them to establish an independent
family. Of 80 separating families (Table 7), however, 17
reported that they received nothing whatsoever from their
parents. Among the remaining 63 families that received
something, there was a wide variation in the kind and the
amount of the gift, ranging from a single buffalo with an
incomplete set of farm equipment to 228 rai of rice land
with a complete set of farm equipment as well as a stock
of paddy to last the new family until the coming harvest.
Parental gifts to newly established families are shown in
Table 8.

10. At least two cases were known where the couples, not
ready to start a family of their own, left the old
families and moved into families of the other spouses.

*243 marriage did take place, the couple were usually obliged
162 to stay with the parents of either the husband or the wife.
178 It is reasonable to believe that the nascent period was
592 prolonged during this period of hard times. Thus, the
182 family size tended to be larger than it normally is. This
[582] is especially true for rice farming families where there
always is some work for members able to work. It is not
surprising, then, that the average size of farm operating
families in Bangchan was 6.3 in 1948 while the average size
of all families was 5.7 according to the 1949 census. A
steady rise in the price of paddy after the war has improved
the economic condition of rice farmers. The increased in-
come, however, had to be spent first on replacement of equip-
ment and housing facilities which had been long overdue.

[792] Finally, the bumper crop of 1948 with an ever-increasing
price put an end to farm misery, and the following dry
season saw a record number of newly ordained priests and

• [591] merit making activities. From then on proportionately more
marriages took place and there were fewer economic obstacles
to keep newly wed couples from starting out independently.
The combined effect of termination of prolonged nascent
period and freer establishment of new families was that
the size of the farm operating family was considerably re-
duced.

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It may seem strange that more marriages should bring
about a drop in the number of the young from 2.5 per family
in 1948 to 2.0 in 1952. By the young is meant, however,